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# The Peerless Series

## No. 71

# Once Upon a Midnight

A Dramatization of Poe's "Raven"

By Vincent P. Sullivan



PRICE 50 CENTS



Frank J. Stanton, Publisher  
Norwich, N. Y.

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**Stanton Amusement Co., Norwich, N. Y.**

# Once Upon a Midnight

A Dramatization of Poe's "Raven"

By Vincent P. Sullivan

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FRANK J. STANTON

Norwich, New York

# Once Upon a Midnight

## SYNOPSIS

This one act play, a dramatization of Edgar Allan Poe's celebrated poem, "The Raven," tells the story of a remorseful young Student who suffered his true love to die of a broken heart. The action takes place "ONCE UPON A MIDNIGHT," exactly one year after the awful event, that frightful night in bleak December, when the lovely Lenore perished in the storm, killed by the cruelty of her lover. The Student is discovered poring over his books in an effort to banish his dreadful memories, when, in the lull of the storm, a queer tapping is heard. He traces this tapping to his window, and opening it, a "stately Raven of the saintly days of yore" stalks in and alights on the bust of Pallas over the door. Out of sheer curiosity he addresses the Raven and is surprised and terrified to receive a reply. He questions it frantically but to all queries it has but one answer, "Never, nevermore." These replies are made by Voice of the Night, the character visible to the audience but unseen by the Student. Exhausted, the Student sinks into a dream. In this dream the troupe of dancing children, garbed as angels, enter, swinging incense and laying a path of roses; whereupon, presently enters the Spirit of Lenore. She sings "Lenore's Answer" and in a dim light disappears. The Student awakens from his dream and begs the Raven to tell "if within the distant heaven he shall clasp the sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore." But to all his pleadings and entreaties the terrible verdict remains, "Nevermore." Infuriated, the wretched youth hurls the lighted lamp at the offending Raven, and daybreak reveals the lifeless form of the unhappy young man huddled in a corner of the room. The Spirit of Lenore again enters and sings. An encore verse and chorus is sung by the Company, with "happy ending" effect, showing that the little play was only the Student's dream.

## COSTUMES

For STUDENT, general make-up of Poe in his youth.

For VOICE OF THE NIGHT, black tights and cloak.

For LENORE, flowing white robe and handsome large wings.

For DANCING CHILDREN, (3 with incense and 3 with baskets of roses,) white dresses and gum shoes. (wings not essential.)

## PERMISSION

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APR -4 1922

# Once Upon a Midnight

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE YOUNG STUDENT,  
VOICE OF THE NIGHT,  
THE SPIRIT OF LENORE,  
BALLET OF DANCING CHILDREN.

SCENE--A library. Large open fireplace in which a fire is burning at R. Large doorway, with purple velvet curtains, in Flat at R of C. Above the door is a bust (cf "Pallas"). Lattice window at L 1. An invisible wire is arranged to convey an imitation raven, which seems to enter the window, to the head of the bust. Table with lighted lamp at R C. On table disordered piles of books. No lights but the lamp and the flickering light from hearth. Student, in deep thought, is discovered seated at table. At rise of curtain slight clatter of chairs and high winds of winter are heard.

VOICE OF THE NIGHT--peers through the curtains and speaks:  
Once again on midnight dreary, there he ponders, weak  
and weary,  
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore--  
Now he's nodding, nearly napping, now I'll send the fatal  
tapping,  
Yes, like some one gently rapping, rapping at his chamber  
door. disappears and a tapping is heard.

STUDENT--rousing himself, in chair, What! some visitor,  
some caller, tapping at my lodging door--  
Only this and nothing more. rises, starts to go to door, pauses  
Ah, distinctly I remember it's the selfsame bleak December.  
Then as now, each dying ember casts its ghost upon the  
floor.  
Oh! that God would send the morrow! Vainly I have  
sought to borrow  
From my books surcease of sorrow--sorrow for the lost  
Lenore-- takes portrait of Lenore from table  
For that rare, that radiant maiden whom the angels name  
Lenore--  
Nameless here for evermore. goes to door--movement of curtains

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Ah! the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain

Thrills me, fills me with fantastic terrors never felt before.  
Now I must, to still the beating of my heart, stand here repeating,

What's this visitor entreating entrance at my lodging door?  
Who's this visitor entreating entrance at my lodging door?  
'Tis some friend, I hope, no more.

Fears to hell! my soul grows stronger: he parts curtains and stands in hall looking L hesitate I will no longer,

Sir, I pray, or madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;  
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,

Yes, so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my lodging door, goes L behind Flat, sound of opening street door

That I scarce was sure I heard you. What! I open wide the door,

Darkness, night and nothing more.

Deep into the darkness peering, must I stand here, wondering, fearing,

Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before?

Must the silence be unbroken, must the stillness give no token?

Not a single word is spoken, not a whispered word-- sound of locking a door

VOICE OF THE NIGHT uncanny tone Lenore.

STUDENT Re-enters Who has whispered? Let the echo murmur back the word

VOICE OF THE NIGHT Lenore.

STUDENT with terror Merely this? Oh God, no more!  
Half my heart is dead from yearning, all my soul within is burning, tapping is heard again

What! again I hear a tapping somewhat louder than before.  
Surely that is, surely that is something at my window lattice. goes to window and opens the casement

Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore--  
Let my heart be still a moment, and this mystery explore--  
'Tis the wind, thank God, no more.

I'll make sure opens lattice and try the shutter. What is all

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this flirt and flutter? the wire over bust is pulled and bird  
seems to fly from window and perch on bust

Heaven and earth! a stately Raven of the saintly days of  
yore!

Not the least obeisance made he, not a minute stopped or  
stayed he,

But, with mien or lord or lady, perched above my chamber  
door.

Perch, old bird! is there no more? sits, facing the bird

Yes, this ebony bird is 'guiling my sad fancy into smiling,  
By the grave and stern decorum, and his eyes of blood-red  
gore.

Though thy crest is shorn and shaven, thou, old bird, art  
sure no craven.

Ghastly, grim, and ancient Raven, wandering from the  
nightly shore,

Tell me what thy lordly name is on the night's Plutonian  
shore!

Croak, sir Raven,

VOICE OF THE NIGHT    Nevermore.

STUDENT    Much I marvel this ungainly fowl can hear  
discourse so plainly,

Though his answer little meaning, little relevancy bore.

For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being  
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber  
door--

Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber  
door,

Croaking only "Nevermore."

Come, sir Raven, sitting lonely, why upon the bust speak  
only

That one word, as if your soul in that one word you do  
outpour?

Will you nothing further utter? will you not a feather  
flutter?

Ah well, I myself must mutter, "Other friends have flown  
before.

On the morrow you will leave me, as my friends have flown  
before."

Croak, sir Raven,

VOICE OF THE NIGHT    Nevermore.

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**STUDENT** startled How the still, dead night is broken,  
by reply so aptly spoken.

And yet, doubtless what it utters is its only stock and store,  
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful  
disaster

Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden  
bore--

Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore of

**VOICE OF THE NIGHT** Never, nevermore.

**STUDENT** So, sir Raven, still beguiling my sad fancy  
into smiling,

Wait! I'll wheel this cushioned seat in front of you, and  
bust, and door. changes position of the chair

Here upon the velvet sinking, I'll betake myself to linking  
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what an ominous bird of yore,  
What a grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird  
of yore,

Means in croaking "Nevermore." pause

Here I sit engaged in guessing, but no syllable addressing  
To this fowl whose fiery eyes now burn into my bosom's  
core. pause

This and more I sit divining, with my head at ease reclining  
On the cushion's velvet lining, with the lamplight gloat-  
ing o'er,

But whose velvet violet lining, with the lamplight gloat-  
ing o'er,

She shall press, ah, nevermore. kisses portrait of Lenore pause  
faint, soft music is heard

Ah, methinks the air grows denser, perfumed by some  
unseen censor,

Swung by angels whose faint footfalls tinkle on the tufted  
floor. He sleeps. Enter ballet of children, three swinging in-  
cense, and three with fancy baskets of flowers. They scatter the  
flowers from the door to Student's chair, making a path. They  
then dance around Student and Exit. Enter **SPIRIT OF LEN-  
ORE** over the path of flowers to Student's chair. She sings first  
verse and chorus of "Lenore's Answer," and then disappears un-  
der a dim light. Student awakens with a shriek.

**STUDENT** to Raven Wretch! Oh wretch! thy God hath  
lent thee-- by these angels he hath sent thee



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Respite--respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore.

Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe, and forget the lost Lenore.

Speak, sir Raven!

VOICE OF THE NIGHT Nevermore.

STUDENT Prophet, prophet, thing of evil!-- prophet still, if bird or devil!

Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,

Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted--  
On this home by horror haunted--tell me truly I implore,  
Is there, is there balm in Gilead? Tell me, tell me, I implore!

VOICE OF THE NIGHT Never, nevermore.

STUDENT Prophet, prophet, thing of evil! prophet still, if bird or devil!

By that Heaven that bends above us-- by that God we both adore--

Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,

It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore--

Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore?

VOICE OF THE NIGHT Never, nevermore.

STUDENT in agony Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend, this is the parting!

Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!

Leave no black plume as a token, of the lie thy soul hath spoken!

Leave my loneliness unbroken! quit that bust above my door!

Take thy beak from out my heart! take, take thy form from off my door! he hurls the lighted lamp at the Raven.  
All lights out

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**VOICE OF THE NIGHT** Never, nevermore. **STUDENT** is dead. Dim spot-light shows his lifeless form on the floor. Spot-light on curtains shows **SPIRIT OF LENORE** Entering. She sings second verse and chorus of "Lenore's Answer." Immediately after song, between the curtains, in the spot-light, is seen

**VOICE OF THE NIGHT** And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting  
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above his chamber door;  
And its eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming.  
And the hearth-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;  
And his soul indicating student from out the shadow that lies floating on the floor.  
Shall be lifted--nevermore!

**GRAND FINALE** by entire cast, singing "Happy Ending" version of "Lenore's Answer."

Our little play about Lenore  
Is but a wild nightmare of yore;  
For here they stand all safe and sound,--  
Lenore with wedding roses crown'd.

Chorus:

Your day will come and toil will bring you glory,  
When fortune's store will cheer your weary heart.  
Friends come and go as this old world rolls on;  
Through loss and gain, Truth will remain!  
When foes are dead and gone.

CURTAIN

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\* \* \*The complete words and music of "Lenore's Answer", (published by the N. Y. Trend Pub. Co., 652 39th St., Brooklyn, N. Y.,) will be sent postpaid for 25 cts by the **STANTON AMUSEMENT CO., NORWICH, N. Y.**

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**28 Too Much of a Good Thing** An interlude for 3 male characters, two blacks. Very laughable and funny. It will fit in nicely in any entertainment, minstrel or other. Will run about 15 minutes.

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**38 The Doctor's Assistant.** An extremely funny farce that runs 30 minutes. The fun occurs in the doctor's office and 4 males assist in making it, the doctor's "country" assistant furnishing about 90 per cent. Besides Reuben, in the cast are Dr. Killmore, a gentleman who is mistaken for a patient, and a policeman.

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